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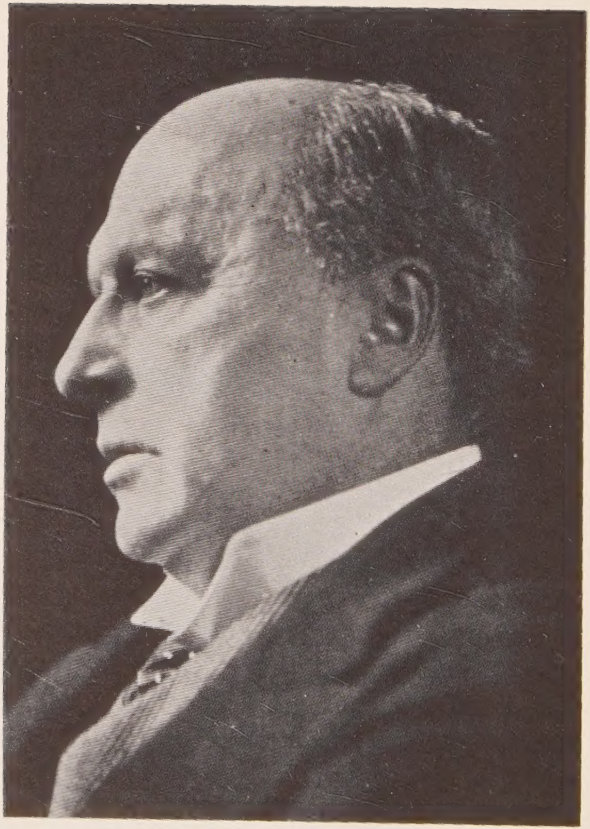
HENRY JAMES



HENRY JAMES

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By

REBECCA WEST

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HENRY JAMES

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R. W.

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I

THE SOURCES

AT various times during the latter half of the eighteenth century there crossed the Atlantic two Protestant Irishmen, a Lowland Scotsman, and an Englishman, and thereby they fixed the character of Mr Henry James' genius. For the essential thing about Mr James was that he was an American; and that meant, for his type and generation, that he could never feel at home until he was in exile. He came of a stock that was the product of culture and needed it as part of its environment. But at the time of his childhood and youth—he was born in 1843—culture was a thing that was but budding here and there in America, in such corners as were not being used in the business of establishing the material civilisation of the new country. The social life of old New York and Boston had its delicacy,

its homespun honesty of texture, its austerer sort of beauty; but plainly the American people were too preoccupied by their businesses and professions to devote their money to the embellishment of *salons* or their intelligence to the development of manners. Hawthorne and Emerson and Margaret Fuller and their friends were trying to make a culture against time; but any record of their lives which gives a candid account of how desperately these people had to struggle to make the meanest living shows that the poor American ants were then utterly unable to form the leisured community which is the necessary environment for grasshoppers. "The impression of Emerson's personal history is condensed into the single word Concord," wrote Mr James later, "and all the condensation in the world will not make it rich." There was no blinking the fact that in attempting to set up in this unfinished country Art was like a delicate lady who moves into a house before the plaster is dried on the walls; she was bound to lead an invalid existence.

This incapacity of America to supply the colour of life became obvious to Henry and William James, the two charming little boys in tight trousers and brass-buttoned jackets, one of whom grew up to write fiction as though it were philosophy and the other to write philosophy as though it were fiction, at a very early age. It did not escape their infant observation that the ladies and gentlemen who fascinated them by dancing on the tight-rope at Barnum's Museum always bore exotic names, and when they grew older and developed the youthful taste for anecdotic art they found it could be gratified only by such European importations as Thorwaldsen's *Christ and His Disciples*, the great white images of which were ranged round the maroon walls of the New York Crystal Palace, or Benjamin's Haydon's pictures in the Düsseldorf collection in Broadway. And when they grew older still and began to show a fine talent for painting and drawing their unfolding artistic sense found more and more intimations of the wonder of Europe. *A View of Tuscany*

that hung in the Jameses' home was pronounced by a friend who had lived much in Italy not to be of Tuscany at all. Colours in Tuscany were softer; but such brightness might be found in other parts of Italy. So Europe was as various as that—a place of innumerable changing glories like a sunrise, but better than a sunrise, inasmuch as every glory was encrusted with the richness of legend.

But most powerful of all influences that made the Jameses rebel against the narrowness of Broadway and the provincial spareness of the old New York, which must have been something like a neat virgin Bloomsbury, was their father. The Reverend Henry James was wasted on young America; it had developed neither the creative stream that would have inspired him nor the intellectual follies that he could slay with that beautiful wit which made him one of the great letter-writers of the world. "Carlyle is the same old sausage, fizzing and sputtering in his own grease, only infinitely *more* unreconciled to the blest Providence which

guides human affairs. He names God frequently and alludes to the highest things as if they were realities, but all only as for a picturesque effect, so completely does he seem to regard them as habitually circumvented and set at naught by the politicians." The man who could write that should have been a strong and salutary influence on English culture, and he knew it. It is probable that when he and his wife paid what Mr James tells us was their " first (that is our mother's first) visit to Europe, which had quite immediately followed my birth, which appears to have lasted some year and a half "—the last clause of this sentence is unfortunate for a novelist famous for his deliberation—he brought his babies with him with a solemnity of intention, as if to dip them in a holy well. Thus it was that the little Jameses not only bore themselves proudly through their childhood as became those who had lived as babies in Piccadilly, and read *Punch* with a proprietary instinct, but were also possessed in spirit by something that was more than the discontent

with the flatness of daily life and the desire for a brighter scene that comes to the ordinary child. From their father's preoccupation they gained a rationalised consciousness that America was an incomplete environment, that in Europe there were many mines of treasure which they must find and rifle if they hoped for the health of their minds and the salvation of their souls.

In 1855, when Henry James was twelve, the family yielded to its passion and crossed the Atlantic. The following four years were of immense importance to Mr James, and consequently to ourselves, for he had been born with a mind that received impressions as if they had been embraces and remembered them with as fierce a leaping of the blood; just as his brother William's mind acquired and created systems of thought as joyously as other men like meeting friends and establishing a family. He found London in the main jolly, rather ugly, but comfortable and full of character, just as he had seen it in *Punch*, but here and there detected—

notably on a drive from London Bridge—black outcrops of Hogarth's London. "It was a soft June evening, with a lingering light and swarming crowds, as they then seemed to me, of figures reminding me of George Cruikshank's Artful Dodger and his Bill Sykes and his Nancy, only with the bigger brutality of life, which pressed upon the cab, the Early Victorian four-wheeler, as we jogged over the Bridge, and cropped up in more and more gas-lit patches for all our course, culminating, somewhere far to the west, in the vivid picture, framed by the cab window, of a woman reeling backward as a man felled her to the ground with a blow in the face." He knew Paris, then being formed by the free flourish of Baron Haussmann into its present splendours of wide regularity, yet still homely with remnants of the dusty ruralism of its pre-Napoleonic state; he saw all the pretty show of the Second Empire, he stood in the Champs-Elysées and watched the baby Prince Imperial roll by to St. Cloud with his escort of blue and silver *cent-gardes*; and the

Galerie d'Apollon in the Louvre, its floors gleaming with polished wood, its walls glowing with masterpieces, and its proportions awesomely interminable and soaring, was the scene of his young imaginative life. Those were the great places; but there were also Geneva and Boulogne and Zurich and Bonn, the differences of which he savoured, and above all the richness of desultory contact with arts and persons of the various countries. He gaped at the exquisiteness of ugly Rose Chéri at the Gymnase, copied Delacroix, read *Evan Harrington* as it came out in *Once a Week*; was at school with a straight-nosed boy called Henry Houssaye and a snub-nosed boy called Coquelin; was tutored by Robert Thompson, the famous Edinburgh teacher who was afterwards to instruct Robert Louis Stevenson and many other eminent Scots in Jacobite sympathies as well as the more usual subjects, and by M. Lerambert whose verse had been praised by Sainte-Beuve in his *Causeries*. "Impressions," writes Mr James of this period,

" were not merely all right but were the dearest things in the world."

And one must remember that not only were impressions much to young Henry James, they were all he had. His mental life consisted of nothing else. His natural inaptitude for acquiring systematised knowledge was probably intensified by the study of foreign languages entailed by this travel; for if a child spends its time learning several systems of naming things it plainly has less energy to spare for learning systems of arranging things. At any rate his inability to grasp the elements of arithmetic and mathematics led to his removal from the Polytechnic School at Zurich, and was the cause of despair in all his tutors. But most minds, however incapable they may be of following the exact sciences or speculative thought, have some sort of idea of the system of the universe inserted into them by early instruction in one or other of the religious faiths. This unifying influence was refused to Henry James by the circumstance that his father had found certain religious doubts

that had almost driven him from the ministry solved in the works of Swedenborg, which he found not at all incredible but—as he once said in a phrase that showed him his son's own father—fairly "insipid with veracity." On this foundation of Swedenborgianism he had built up for himself a religion which was "nothing if not a philosophy, extraordinarily complex and worked out and original, intensely personal as an exposition, yet not only susceptible of application, but clamorous for it, to the whole field of consciousness, nature and society, history, knowledge, all human relations and questions, every pulse of the process of our destiny." This was no playground for the young intelligence, so young Henry James was told to prepare himself by drinking from such springs as seemed to him refreshing. When he was asked to what church he went he was bidden by his father to reply that "we could plead nothing less than the whole privilege of Christendom, and that there was no communion, even that of the Catholics, even that of the Jews, even that of the Swedenborgians,

from which we need find ourselves excluded." He certainly liked to exercise this privilege, but he admits that " my grounds may have been but the love of the *exhibition* in general, thanks to which figures, faces, furniture, sounds, smells and colours became for me, wherever enjoyed, and enjoyed most where most collected, a positive little orgy of the senses and riot of the mind." Which was to be expected; as also was the fact that he never broke his childish habit of regarding his father's religion as a closed temple standing in the centre of his family life, the general holiness of which he took for granted so thoroughly that it never occurred to him to investigate its particulars.

This European visit came to an end in 1859, and William and Henry James spent the next year or so at Newport studying art under the direction of their friend John La Farge, with the result that William painted extremely well in the style of Manet, and Henry showed as little ability in this direction as he had shown in any other. In 1861 the Civil War broke out; and had it not

been for an accident the whole character of Mr James' genius would have been altered. If he had seen America by the light of bursting shells and flaming forest he might never have taken his eyes off her again, he might have watched her fascinated through all the changes of tone and organisation which began at the close of the war, he might have been the Great American Novelist in subject as well as origin. But it happened, in that soft spring when he and every other young man of the North realised that there was a crisis at hand in which their honour was concerned and they must answer Lincoln's appeal for recruits, that he was one day called to help in putting out a fire. In working the fire-engine he sustained an injury so serious that he could never hope to share the Northern glory, that there were before him years of continuous pain and weakness, that ultimately he formed a curious and on the whole mischievous conception of himself. For his humiliating position as a delicate and unpromising student at Harvard Law School while his younger brothers, Wilky and

Robertson, were officers in the Northern Army and William was pursuing a brilliant academic career or naturalising with Agassiz in South America, seemed a confirmation of his tutors' opinion that he was an inarticulate mediocrity who would never be able to take a hand in the business of life. And so he worked out a scheme of existence, which he accepted finally in an hour of glowing resignation when he was returning by steamer to Newport from a visit to a camp of wounded soldiers at Portsmouth Grove, in which the one who stood aside and felt rather than acted acquired thereby a mystic value, a spiritual supremacy, which—but this was perhaps a later development of the theory—would be rubbed off by participation in action.

It was, therefore, with defiant industry, with the intention of proving that such as he was he had his peculiar worth, that he set to work to become a writer. His first story was published in *The Atlantic Monthly* when he was twenty-one, and it was followed by a number of stories, travel sketches, and critical essays, some of which have been

reprinted, and a few farces which have not. He also went through a necessary preface of the literary life by reading the proofs of George Eliot's novels before they appeared in the *Atlantic* and reviewing; the profession of literature differs from that of the stage in that the stars begin instead of ending as dressers. In 1869 he went to Europe and, gaining certain impressions that had been inaccessible to him as a child, finally fixed the dye in which his talent was to be immersed for the rest of his life. He stepped for the first time into " a private park of great oaks . . . where I knew my first sense of a matter afterwards, through fortunate years, to be more fully disclosed: the springtime in such places, the adored footpath, the first primroses, the stir and scent of renascence in the watered sunshine and under spreading boughs that were somehow before aught else the still reach of the remembered lines of Tennyson. . . ." He was admitted to the homes of Ruskin, Rossetti, Morris, Darwin, and George Eliot, and allowed to see the wheels go round. But the real significance

of this journey to Mr James' genius is the part it played in the last days of his beautiful cousin, Mary Temple. She should have had before her a long career of nobility, for "she was absolutely afraid of nothing she might come to by living with enough sincerity and enough wonder." She pretended not to know that she had been cheated out of this, but as she lay on the death-bed that she would not admit to be even a sick-bed, her eyes were fixed intensely on the progress of her cousin through all the experiences that should have been hers. There came a day when all illusion failed, and she died dreadfully, clinging to consciousness. Her death was felt by Henry and William James as the end of their youth.

That, as Mr James would have said, is the *donnée*. The must was trodden out, it had only to ferment, to be bottled, to be mellowed by time into the perfect wine. There is nothing in all the innumerable volumes that Mr James was to pour out in the next forty-five years of which the intimation is not present in these first adventures.

II

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

IT is no use turning up those first stories that appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Galaxy* unless one has formed an affection for the literary personality of Mr James. The image they provoke of the literary prentice bending over his task with the tip of his tongue reflectively protruding like a small boy drawing on his slate, is amusing enough; but they themselves are such pale dreams as might visit a New England spinster looking out from her snuff-coloured parlour on a grey drizzling day. Where there is any richness of effect, as in *The Romance of Certain Old Clothes*, it comes from the influence of Nathaniel Hawthorne. That story, which tells how a girl loved her sister's husband, waited eagerly for her death that she might marry him, and later wheedled from him the key of the chest

in which the dead wife had left her finery to await her baby daughter's maturity, is seven-eighths prelude, and the catastrophe, which is the finding of the girl kneeling dead beside the chest with the mark of phantom fingers on her throat, comes with too short and small a report. But in spite of its pitiful construction it is the only one of the dozen stories which Mr James published before his visit to Europe in 1869 that shows any of the imaginative exuberance which one accepts as an earnest of coming genius.

Hawthorne was not altogether a happy influence—it is due to him that Mr James' characters have " almost wailed " their way from *The Passionate Pilgrim* to *The Golden Bowl*—but he certainly shepherded Mr James into the European environment and lent him a framework on which to drape his emotions until he had discovered his own power to build up an imaginative structure. The plot of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, with its American who comes to England to claim a cousin's estate, falls in love with the usurper's sister, is driven from the door, and dies just

after the usurper's death has delivered to him all he wants, is very clumsy Hawthorne, but in those days Mr James could not draw normal events and he had to have some medium for expressing his wealth of feeling about England. It is amazing to see how rich that wealth already was, how much deeper than mere pleasure in travel was his delight in the parks and private grandeurs of England; and how, too, a fundamental fallacy was already perverting it to an almost Calvinist distrust of the activities of the present.

"I entered upon life a perfect gentleman," says the American as he sits in Hampton Court. "I had the love of old forms and pleasant rites, and I found them nowhere—found a world all hard lines and harsh lights, without lines, without composition, as they say of pictures, without the lovely mystery of colour. . . . Sitting here, in this old park, in this old country, I feel that I hover on the misty verge of what might have been! I should have been born here, not there; here my makeshift distinctions would have found things they'd have been true of. . . .

This is a world I could have got on with beautifully."

There you have the first statement of the persistent illusion, to which he was helped by his odd lack of the historic sense and which confused his estimate of modern life, that the past would have been a happier home for those who like himself loved fastidious living. He had a tremendous sense of the thing that is and none at all of the thing that has been, and thus he was always being misled by such lovely shells of the past as Hampton Court into the belief that the past which inhabited them was as lovely. The calm of Canterbury Close appeared to him as a remnant of a time when all England, bowed before the Church, was as calm; whereas the calm is really a modern condition brought about when the Church ceased to have anything to do with England. He never perceived that life is always a little painful at the moment, not only at this moment but at all moments; that the wine of experience always makes a raw draught when it has just been

trodden out from bruised grapes by the pitiless feet of men, that it must be subject to time before it acquires suavity. The lack of this perception matters little in his early work but it is vastly important in shaping his later phases.

There are no such personal revelations in *The Madonna of the Future*, nor anything, indeed, at all characteristic of Mr James. There is beauty in the tale of the American painter who dreams over a model for twenty years, while he and she grow old, and leaves at his death nothing more to show for his dreams than a cracked blank canvas; and the Florentine background is worked on diligently and affectionately. But it is admirable in quite an uncharacteristic way, like a figure picture painted with the utmost brilliance of technique and from perfect models by a painter whose real passion was for landscape. Yet it was only a year later, in *Madame de Mauves*, that Mr James found himself, both his manner and the core of the matter which was to occupy him for the happiest part of his literary life. Euphemia

de Mauves, the prim young American who moves languidly through the turfy avenues of the French forest, her faith in decency of living perpetually outraged by her husband's infidelities and his odd demand that she should make him a cuckold so that at least he should not have the discomfort of looking up at her, is the first of the many exquisite women whom Mr James brought into being by his capacity to imagine characters solidly and completely, his perception of the subtle tones of life, and his extreme verbal delicacy. And she is given a still greater importance by the queer twist at the end of the story by which M. de Mauves blows his brains out for no reason at all but that he is hopelessly, helplessly, romantically in love with this cold wife who will be so unreasonable about trifles. Mr James writes her story not only as though he stood upon the Atlantic shores looking eastward at the plight of a compatriot domiciled with lewd men and light women, but also as though he sat in the company of certain gracious men and women of the world who could not get under way

with their accomplishment of charm because the grim alien in the corner will keep prodding them with a disapproval as out of place in this salon as a deal plank. Madame de Mauves, in fine, is the first figure invented by Mr James to throw light upon what he called "the international situation."

It took all Mr James' cosmopolitan training to see that there existed an international situation, that the fact that Americans visited Europe constituted a drama. An Englishman who visited Italy did no more than take a look at a more richly coloured order of life that braced him up, as any gay spectacle might have done, to return to his own; his travel was a pleasure, or, at most, if he happened to be a Landor or a Browning, an inspiration. It might reasonably be supposed that the visit to Europe of an American was no greater matter. But Mr James knew that the wealthy American was in the position of a man who has built a comfortable house and has plenty of money over, yet cannot furnish it because furniture is neither made nor sold in his country; until

he has crossed the sea to the land where they do make furniture he must sleep and eat on the floor.

"One might enumerate," he writes in those early days, "the items of high civilisation as it exists in other countries, which are absent from the texture of American life, until it should become a wonder what was left. No State, in the European sense of the word, and indeed barely a specific national name. No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy. . . ."

There follows a long list, so long as to provoke the "natural remark . . . that if these things are left out everything is left out." And, Mr James goes on to complain, "it takes so many things—such an accumulation of history and custom, such a complexity of manners and types, to form a fund of suggestion for a novelist." He wrote novelist because at the moment he was criticising Hawthorne, but he would certainly have applied his phrase to anyone who desired his life to be not a corduroy track

but a marble terrace with palaces on the one hand and fair gardens on the other.

Since the pilgrimage for these items of high civilisation appeared to Europeans—as innumerable contemporary allusions show it did—as mere globe-trottings, the pilgrims themselves were likely to be as misunderstood. For one thing, although they were unorganised so far as culture went, they formed at home a very cohesive moral community. The American women who came to Europe took for granted that however people might be habited—people, that is, whose manners showed them "nice"—and in whatever frivolous array they might be flounced and ribboned, they were certain to wear next their skin the hair-shirt of Puritan rectitude. The innocent freedoms which they permitted themselves because they held this supposition, and the terrifying surmises to which these gave rise in the mind of the Old World, unaware of the innocence of the New, made much material for drama. And more dramatic still was the moment, which came to so many of the travellers who

formed close personal relationships with Europeans, when they realised that the moral standards to which they had nationally pledged themselves, and which they individually obeyed with extraordinary fidelity, were here regarded as simply dowdy. "Compromise!" was the cry of Latin and even English society. "Compromise on every and any of the Commandments you like! Do anything you can, in fact, to rub down those rude angles you present to human intercourse!" And yet it was not to be deduced that Europe was lax. One had only to look behind the superficial show to see that it had its own religion, perhaps a more terrible religion than any New England ever knew, and that what seemed its laziest pleasures were sometimes its most dreadful rites.

This last conception of Europe is the subject of *Roderick Hudson* (1875). *Roderick Hudson* is not a good book. It throws a light upon the lack of attention given at that period to the art of writing that within a few years of each other two men of great

genius—Thomas Hardy and Henry James—wrote in their thirties first novels spoilt by technical blemishes of a sort that the most giftless modern miss with a subscription to Mudie's would never commit in her first literary experiment. *Roderick Hudson* is wooden, it is crammed with local colour like a schoolmistress's bedroom full of photographs of Rome, it has a plain boiled suet heroine called Mary. But its idea is magnificent. An American of fortune takes Hudson, who has already shown talent as a sculptor, from his stool in a lawyer's office in Northampton, Massachusetts, and sets him up in a studio in Rome. It is the fear of old Mrs Hudson and of Mary, his fiancée, that European life will be too soft for him. But the very opposite occurs; it is he who is too soft for European life. The business of art means not only lounging under the pines of the Villa Ludovisi and chiselling the noble substance of Carrara marble; it means also the painful toil of creation, which demands from the artist an austerer renunciation of every grossness than was ever

expected of any law-abiding citizen of Northampton, which sends a man naked and alone to awful moments which, if he be strong, give him spiritual strength, but if he be weak heap on him the black weakness of neurasthenia. And when that has turned him into a raw, hurt, raging creature he is further snared by the loveliness of Christina Light, who is characteristically European in that her circumstances have not the same clear beauty as her face. She is being hawked over the Continent to find a rich husband by her mother and a Cavaliere who is really her father, and this ugly girlhood has so corrupted her vigorous spirit that the young American's courtship provokes from her nothing but eccentric favours or perverse insults. After the collapse of his art and his love Roderick falls over a precipice in a too minutely described Switzerland, hurled by a *dénouement* which has inspired Mr James to one of his broadest jokes. In the first edition Roderick, on hearing that, while he has been vexing his benefactor with his moods, that

gentleman has been manfully repressing a passion for Mary, exclaims, " It's like something in a novel ! " which Mr James in the definitive edition has altered to, " It's like something in a bad novel ! "

This conception of Europe as a complex organism which would have no use, or only a cruel use, for those bred by the simple organism of America, animates *Four Meetings* (1877), that exquisite short story which came first of all of the many masterpieces that Mr James was to produce. It is the tale of a little schoolmistress who, having long nourished a passion for Europe upon such slender intimations as photographs of the Castle of Chillon, at last collects a sum for the trip, is met at Havre by a cousin, one of those Americans on whom Continental life has acted as a solvent of all decent moral tissues, and is tricked out of her money by his story of a runaway marriage with a Countess ; returns to New England hoping to " see something of this dear old Europe yet," and has that hope ironically fulfilled by the descent upon her for life of the said

Countess, who is so distinctly "something of this dear old Europe" that the very sight of her transports the travelled recounter of the story to "some dusky landing before a shabby Parisian *quatrième*—to an open door revealing a greasy ante-chamber, and to Madame, leaning over the banisters, while she holds a faded dressing-gown together and bawls down to the portress to bring up her coffee." It is one of the saddest stories in the world, and one of the cleverest. There is not one of its simple phrases but has its beautiful bearing on the subject, and in the treatment of emotional values one sees that the essays on *French Poets and Novelists* (1878), which for some years he had been sending to America with the excited air of a missionary, were the notes of an attentive pupil. "Detachment" was the lesson that that period preached in its reaction against the George Sand method, whereby the author rolled through his pages locked in an embrace with his subject. We have forgotten its real significance, so frequently has it been used as an excuse for

the treatment of emotional situations with encyclopædic detail of circumstance and not a grain of emotional realisation, but here we can recover it. The author's pity for the schoolmistress is never allowed to make his Countess sinister instead of gross, and his sense of the comic in the Countess is never allowed to make the schoolmistress's woe more dreary; the situation stands as solid and has as many aspects as it would have in life.

The American (1877) still holds this view of Europe. Its theme, to quote Mr James in the preface of the definitive edition, is "the situation, in another country and an aristocratic society, of some robust but insidiously beguiled and betrayed, some cruelly wronged compatriot; the point being in especial that he should suffer at the hands of persons pretending to represent the highest possible civilisation and to be of an order far superior to his own." Christopher Newman, the robust compatriot, is such a large, simple, lovable person that the rest of the story leads one to suspect that one may say of Mr James,

as he said of Balzac, that " his figures, as a general thing, are better than the use he makes of them." He walks through Europe examining its culture with such an effect on the natives as an amiable buffalo traversing the Galerie d'Apollon might produce upon the copyists of the Louvre, and finally presents himself at the house where he is least welcome in the world, the home of the de Bellegardes, a proud and ancient Royalist family. Thereafter, the novel is an exposition of the way things do not happen. Claire de Cintré, the widowed daughter whom Newman desires to marry, is represented as having above all things beauty of character; but when her family snatches her from him in a frenzy of pride she allows herself to be bundled into a convent with a weakness that would convict of imbecility any woman of twenty-eight. And since her mother and brother had murdered her father by refusing him medicine at a physical crisis, and sustained themselves in the act by the reflection that after all they were only keeping up the good old family tone, one

wonders where she got this beauty of character. The child of this damned house might have flamed with a strange fire, but she could not have diffused a rectory lamplight. But the series of inconsistencies of which this is only one leads, like a jolting motor-bus that puts one down at Hampton Court, to an exquisite situation. Newman discovers the secret of the Marquis' murder and intends to publish it as a punishment for the cruel wrong the de Bellegardes have done him, but sacrifices this satisfaction simply because there can be no link—not even the link of revenge—between such as they and such as he. In all literature there is no passage so full of the very passion of moral exaltation as the description of how Newman stands before the Carmelite house in the Rue d'Enfer and looks up at the blank, discoloured wall, behind which his lost lady is immured, then walks back to Notre Dame and there, "the far-away bells chiming off into space, at long intervals, the big bronze syllables of the Word," decides that such things as revenge "were really not his

game." So it is with Mr James to the end. The foreground is as often as not red with the blood of slaughtered probabilities; a gentleman at a dinner-party tells the lady on his left (a perfect stranger who never appears again in the story) that some years ago he proposed to the lady in white sitting opposite to them; a curio dealer calls on a lady in Portland Place just to wind up the plot. But the great glow at the back, the emotional conflagration, is always right.

The Europeans (1878) marks the first time when Mr James took the international situation as a joke, and he could joke very happily in those days when his sentence was a straight young thing that could run where it liked, instead of a delicate creature swathed in relative clauses as an invalid in shawls. There is no other book by Mr James which has quite the clear, sunlit charm of this description of the visit of Eugenia, the morganatically married Baroness, and her brother Felix, the Bohemian painter, to their cousins' New England farm. There is nothing at all to

their discredit in the past of these two graceful young people, but they resemble Harlequin and Columbine in the instability of their existence and the sharp line they draw between their privacy and their publicity. It appears to them natural that the private life should be spent largely in wondering how the last public appearance went off and planning effects for the next, a point of view which arouses the worst suspicions in their cousins, who are accustomed to live as though the sky were indeed a broad open eye. So Felix has the greatest difficulty in persuading his uncle, who takes thirty-two bites to a moral decision, just as Mr Gladstone took thirty-two bites to a mouthful, that he is a suitable husband for his cousin Gertrude; and poor Eugenia fails altogether in an environment where a lie from her lips is not treated as *un petit péché d'une petite femme*, but remains simply a lie. The frame of mind this state of affairs produces in the poor lady is exquisitely described in a passage which shows her going wistfully through the house of the man who

did not propose to her because he detected her lie, after a visit to his dying mother.

"Mrs Acton had told Eugenia that her waiting-woman would be in the hall to show her downstairs; but the large landing outside her door was empty, and Eugenia stood there looking about. . . . She passed slowly downstairs, still looking about. The broad staircase made a great bend, and in the angle was a high window, looking westward, with a deep bench, covered with a row of flowering plants in curious old pots of blue China-ware. The yellow afternoon light came in through the flowers and flickered a little on the white wainscots. Eugenia paused a moment; the house was perfectly still, save for the ticking, somewhere, of a great clock. The lower hall stretched away at the foot of the stairs, half covered over with a large Oriental rug. Eugenia lingered a little, noticing a great many things. '*Comme c'est bien!*' she said to herself; such a large, solid, irreproachable basis of existence the place seemed to her to indicate. And then she reflected that Mrs Acton was soon to withdraw from it. The reflection accompanied her the rest of the

way downstairs, where she paused again, making more observations. The hall was extremely broad, and on either side of the front door was a wide, deeply-set window, which threw the shadows of everything back into the house. There were high-backed chairs along the wall and big Eastern vases upon tables, and, on either side, a large cabinet with a glass front and little curiosities within, dimly gleaming. The doors were open—into the darkened parlour, the library, the dining-room. All these rooms seemed empty. Eugenia passed along and stopped a moment on the threshold of each. '*Comme c'est bien!*' she murmured again; she had thought of just such a house as this when she decided to come to America. She opened the front door for herself—her light tread had summoned none of the servants—and on the threshold she gave a last look. . . ."

That is the pure note of the early James, like a pipe played carefully by a boy. It sounds as beautifully in *Daisy Miller*, that short novel which, though it deals with conditions peculiar to a small section of

Continental life forty years ago, will strike each new generation afresh as sad and lovely. Daisy, who is like one of those girls who smile upon us from the covers of American magazines, glaringly beautiful and healthy but without the "tone" given by diligent study of the grace of conduct, comes to Europe and plays in its sunshine like a happy child. She wants to go to the Castle of Chillon, so she accepts the escort for the afternoon of a young American who is staying at the same hotel; she likes to walk in the Pincian, so she takes a stroll there one afternoon with a certain liquid-eyed Roman. The woman who does a thing for the sake of the thing in itself is always suspected by society, and the American colony, which professes the mellow conventions of Europe with all its own national crudity, accuses her of vulgarity and even lightness. They talk so bitterly that when the young American, who is half in love with Daisy, finds her viewing the Colosseum by moonlight with the Roman, he leaps to the conclusion that she is a disreputable woman.

Why he does so is not quite clear, since surely it is the essential thing about a disreputable woman that her evenings are not free for visits to the Colosseum. Poor Daisy takes in part of his meaning and, saying in a little strange voice, "I don't care whether I get Roman fever or not!" goes back to her hotel and dies of malaria. And the young American, "staring at the raw protuberance among the April daisies" in the Protestant cemetery, learns from the Roman's lips that Daisy was "most innocent."

It is a lyric whose beauty may be measured by the attention which, in spite of its tragedy, it everywhere provoked. It was interesting to note how often in the obituary notices of Mr James it was said that he had never attained popularity, for it shows how soon London forgets its gifts of fame. From 1875 to 1885 (to put it roughly) all England and America were as captivated by the clear beauty of Mr James' work as in the nineties they were hypnotised by the bright-coloured beauty of Mr Kipling's art. On London staircases

everyone turned to look at the American with the long, silky, black beard which, I am told by one who met him then, gave him the appearance of "an Elizabethan sea captain." But for all the exquisiteness of *Daisy Miller* there were discernible in it certain black lines which, like the dark veining in a crocus that foretells its decay, showed that this was a loveliness which was in the very act of passing. The young American might have been so worked upon by his friends that he could readily believe his Daisy a light woman, but he need not have manifested his acceptance of this belief by being grossly rude to her and by reflecting that if "after Daisy's return there had been an exchange of jokes between the porter and the cab-driver . . . it had ceased to be a matter of serious regret to him that the little American flirt should be 'talked about' by low-minded menials." When one remembers the grave courtesy with which Christopher Newman treated Mlle Noémie Nioche, the little French drab who called herself *un esprit libre*, it is

plain that we are no longer dealing with the same Mr James. The Mr James we are to deal with henceforth had ceased to be an American and had lost his native reactions to emotional stimuli. He was becoming a European and for several years to come was to spend his time slowly mastering its conventions; which means that he was learning a new emotional language.

The first works he produced when he was at once a finished writer and only the cocoon of a European, present the paradoxical appearance of being perfect in phrase and incredibly naive in their estimates of persons and situations. *The Pension Beaurepas* (1879), that melancholy tale of the ailing old American whose wife and daughter have dragged him off on an expensive trip to Europe, while ruin falls on his untended business in New York, has its tone of pathos spoiled by extraordinarily cold-blooded and, to women of to-day, extremely unsavoury discussions of how a girl ought to behave if she wants to be married. *The Siege of London* (1883), which

is the story of a Texan adventuress of many divorces who marries into an English county family, fails to produce the designed effect of outrage, because the adventuress is the only person who shows any signs of human worth, and the life which she is supposed to have violated by her marriage is suggested simply by statements that the people concerned had titles and lived in large houses. In *Pandora* (1884), which describes a German diplomat's amazement that an unmarried girl can be a social success in America, we feel as bored as we would if we were forced to listen to the exclamations of a dog-fancier on finding that a Pekingese with regular features had got a prize at a dog show. In *Lady Barbarina* (1884), which tells how a peer's daughter who marries an American millionaire refuses to live in America, the American picture is painted with the flatness of a flagging interest, and we suspect Mr James of taking English architecture as an index of English character; he had still to grasp the paradox that the people who live in the solidities

of Grosvenor Square are the best colonising and seafaring stock in the world. In *The Reverberator* (1888), wherein an American girl guilelessly prattles to a newspaper correspondent about the affairs of her French fiancé's family and is cast out by them when he publishes her prattlings in the States, we seem to see the international situation slowly fading from Mr James' immediate consciousness. In turning over its pages we see the author sitting down before a pile of white paper and finely inscribing it with memories of past contacts with Americans; we do not see him entering his study with traces still on his lips of a smile provoked in the street outside by the loveliness and innocent barbarism of his compatriots. In those days he had lost America and had not yet found Europe, but he was to find it very soon. In *A London Life* (1889), the tale of an innocent American girl who comes over to live with her sister and her aristocratic English husband, and stands appalled at their debts, their debaucheries, their infidelities, he has rendered

beautifully the feeling caused by ill lives when led in old homes of elmy parks and honourable histories. It is a sense of disgust such as comes to the early-rising guest who goes into a drawing-room in the morning and finds last night's coffee-cups and decanters and cigarette ends looking dreadful in the sunlight. The house is being badly managed; it will go to rack and ruin. That is an aspect of England; but the American onlooker is just a clean-minded little thing that might have bloomed anywhere, and all references to her Americanness are dragged in with an effort. It is plain that he had lost all his love for the international situation.

That Mr James continued to write about Americans in Europe long after their common motive and their individual adventures had ceased to excite his wonder or his sympathy, was the manifestation of a certain delusion about his art which was ultimately to do him a mischief. He believed that if one *knew* a subject one could write about it; and since there was no

aspect of the international situation with which he was not familiar, he could not see why the description of these aspects should not easily make art. The profound truth that an artist should feel passion for his subject was naturally distasteful to one who wanted to live wholly without violence even of the emotions; a preference for passionless detachment was at that date the mode in French literature, which was the only literature that he studied with any attention. The de Goncourts, Zola, and even de Maupassant thought that an artist ought to be able to lift any subject into art by his treatment, just as an advertising agent ought to be able to "float" any article into popularity by his posters. But human experience, which includes a realisation of the deadness of most of the de Goncourts' and Zola's productions, proves the contrary. Unless a subject is congenial to the character of the artist the subconscious self will not wake up and reward the busy conscious mind by distributions of its hoarded riches in the form of the right word,

the magic phrase, the clarifying incident. Why are books about ideas so commonly bad, since the genius of M. Anatole France and Mr Wells have proved that they need not be so, if it be not that the majority of people reserve passion for their personal relationships and therefore never "feel" an idea with the sensitive finger-tips of affection?

The absence of this necessary attitude to his subject explains in part the tenuity of Mr James' later novels on the international situation; but there is also another element that irritates present-day readers and makes the texture of the life represented seem poor. That element, which is not peculiar to Mr James, but is a part of the social atmosphere of his time, is the persistent presentation of woman not as a human but as a sexual being. One can learn nothing of the heroine's beliefs and character for the hullabaloo that has been set up because she has come in too late or gone out too early or omitted to provide herself with that figure of questionable use—for the dove-like manners of the young men forbid the

thought that she was there to protect the girl from assault, and the mild tongues of the young ladies make it unlikely that the duel of the sexes was then so bitter that they required an umpire—the chaperon. It appears that the young woman of that period could get through the world only by perpetually jumping through hoops held up to her by society, a method of progression which was more suited to circus girls than to persons of dignity, and which sometimes caused nasty falls. There is nothing more humiliating to women in all fiction than the end of *A London Life*, where the heroine, appalled at having been left in an opera box alone with a young man, turns to him and begs him, although she knows well that he does not love her, to marry her and save her good name. Purity and innocence are excellent things, but a world in which they have to be guarded by such cramping contrivances of conduct is as ridiculous as a heaven where the saints all go about with their haloes protected by mackintosh covers.

III

TRANSITION

WASHINGTON SQUARE (1881), Mr James' first important work that does not deal with the international situation, is a work of great genius. Into the small mould of the story of how a plain and stupid girl was jilted by a fortune-hunter when he discovered that she would be disinherited by her contemptuous father on her marriage, Mr James concentrated all the sense which he had absorbed throughout his childhood of the simple, provincial life which went on behind the brown stone of old New York. It has in it a wealth of feeling that does not seem to have originated with Mr James, just as an old wives' tale told over and over again by the fireside becomes charged with a synthetic emotion derived from the comments and expressions of innumerable auditors; and one may

surmise that Catherine's tragedy was first presented to him as an item of local gossip, sympathetically discussed by his charming New York cousins and friends. Certainly the tale of this dull girl, who was " twenty years old before she treated herself, for evening wear, to a red satin gown trimmed with gold fringe," and progressed by such clumsinesses through a career of which the only remarkable facts were that " Morris Townsend had trifled with her affection, and that her father had broken its spring," is consecrated by an element of pity which was afterwards signally to disappear from Mr James' work.

The book so beautifully expresses the woe of all those people to whom nothing ever happens, who are aware of the gay challenge of life but are prevented by something leaden in their substance from responding, that one is not surprised to find that like most good stories about inarticulate people —like *Une Vie* and *Un Cœur Simple*—it is written with the most deliberate cunning. The story is evoked according to Turgeniev's

method of calling his novels out of the inchoate real world; and what that is had better, since Mr James had been using it with increasing power since *Roderick Hudson*, be stated in his own words.

"I have always fondly remembered a remark that I heard fall years ago from the lips of Ivan Turgeniev in regard to his own experience of the usual origin of the fictive picture. It began for him almost always with the vision of some person or persons, who hovered before him, soliciting him, as the active or passive figure, interesting him and appealing to him just as they were and by what they were. He saw them, in that fashion, as *disponibles*, saw them subject to the chances, the complications of existence, and saw them vividly, but then had to find for them the right relations, those that would most bring them out; to imagine, to invent and select and piece together the situations most useful and favourable to the sense of the creatures themselves, the complications they would be most likely to produce and to feel.

"'To arrive at these things is to arrive

at my "story,"' he said, 'and that's the way I look for it. The result is that I'm often accused of not having "story" enough. I seem to myself to have as much as I need—to show my people, to exhibit their relations with each other; for that is all my measure. If I watch them long enough I see them come together, I see them *placed*, I see them engaged in this or that act and in this or that difficulty. How they look and move and speak and behave, always in the setting I have found for them, is my account of them—of which I dare say, alas, *que cela manque souvent d'architecture. . . .*'"

And as regards the statement in prose of the conception thus formed it is plain that, although Mr James had formed his irrational dislike of Flaubert many years before, it was that great master who had taught him his art of rubbing down the too brilliant phrase to tone with the quiet harmony of the whole, of obliterating the exotic effect that would compromise the lorn simplicity of the subject. This masterly use of technical resource to unfold an idea whose beauty

would to a lesser artist have seemed hopelessly sheathed in obscurity, makes *Washington Square* the perfect termination to Mr James' first period of genius.

It was unfortunately quite definitely a termination; for until ten years had passed Mr James was doomed to produce no work which was not to have the solidity of its characters and the beauty of its prose rendered slightly ridiculous by its lack of purpose and unity. In those days, when the international theme was slipping from Mr James' grasp and he was looking round for another, one could no more expect him to produce work completely and serenely formed by the imagination than one could ask an author to continue his industry on a journey from Paris to Madrid, with the jolting of the train destroying his physical calm and the new land crying for his attention at the carriage window. For Mr James was literally travelling all through the eighties; he was touring either the countries of Europe with his body or the art of Europe with his mind. It was his intention to find that

intellectual basis without which, his blood and upbringing assured him, he would be unable to use his genius with noble or permanent results.

How difficult this search was to be, and yet how ultimately fruitful, can be judged from *A Little Tour in France* (1884). That is one of the happiest and sunniest travel books in all literature. *Cœlum non animum mutant qui trans mare currunt*; but Mr James did, and it is as pleasant to see his intelligence sunning itself on the hot Latin soil, fresh and cool as though he had not years of the creative struggle behind him and years more to come, as it is to see a lizard crawl from the crevice of a Provençal rock and play among the tufts of rosemary. Yet whenever Mr James has to note some detail in his description of French towns which refers to the life which has formed them, the reader's fury mounts. It is horrible that his references to the Franco-Prussian War should be faintly jocular, and one burns with shame for them until one comes to an amazing sentence about the French Revolution,

in which it is plainly implied that the rightness and necessity of that declaration of the principle of freedom are still debatable questions. One perceives with relief that he said these things because, as one guessed in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, his strong sight of the thing that is was accompanied by blindness to the thing that has been. He did not know whether the Franco-Prussian War was horrible or not, because he had been out of Europe when it raged; and because he had not been born at the time he could no more speak well of the French Revolution than he could propose for his club a person whom he had never met. And for the same reason he failed to envisage the Roman Empire save as a source of agreeable ruins which, since he did not understand the spirit that built them, he imagined might have been made still more agreeable. Their vastness did not impress him as the merging-point of the geological record and history, but stirred in him that benevolence which is often aroused by clumsy largeness. He patted the Roman

Theatre at Arles as though it were Jumbo at the Zoo, and remarked, quite in the manner of Horace Walpole, that the pavement of coloured marble "gives an idea of the *elegance* of the interior"; but the arena at Nîmes and that vast, high, yellow aqueduct, whose three tiers appal the valley of the Gardon, were too much for him, and he pronounced them "not at all *exquisite*." The man who could write those phrases was incapable of forming a philosophy, for no man can fully understand his kind unless he have a revelation of old Rome and perceive in its works a record of the pride men felt in serviceable labour for the State. And yet what, in this particular case, did all that matter? What need was there for Mr James to know anything but that ink makes black, expressive marks on paper, when he could tell so exquisitely how the Château de Chenonceaux sends out its white galleries across the clear water of the Cher, how the crenellated ramparts of the Château d'Amboise look down over hanging gardens to the far-shining Loire,

and with what peculiar wonder Carcassonne, Aigues-Mortes and all the other towns with lovely names, glow in the clear bright light of France? It was enough that there was no beauty on earth that could daunt his power of description.

The record of his mental wanderings is not quite so happy. Mr James has an immense prestige as critic, but a certain sentence that occurred more than once in his obituary notices made it doubtful whether this does not merely mean that people have run their eyes over the titles of Mr James' essays and have accepted the fact that he dealt with authors rarely read by the British as a guarantee of their rareness of merit. That it should be reverently remarked on that most solemn occasion that Flaubert was Mr James' adored master, when he had written more than one exquisitely feline essay to delicately convey what a fluke it was that this fellow who panted under his phrase like a bricklayer under his hod should have produced *Madame Bovary*, is just such an ironic happening as

he would have liked to be introduced into one of his humorous studies of the literary life. Such intimations make one guess that the homage which England loves to pay to the unread is responsible for half Mr James' reputation as a critic; and probably he owed the other half to the gratitude of his readers for a pleasure which is undoubtedly given by his critical writings, but which nevertheless does not prove them great criticism. It is true that *French Poets and Novelists* are the best reviews ever written, and that it is good to listen to the old author gossiping in *Notes on Novelists* (1914) about the authors he had known long ago and to watch him tracing, with all his supreme genius for detecting personality, the imprint of dead masters on the fading surface of old work. But he is always entirely lacking in that necessary element of great criticism, the capacity for universal reference. The eye that judges a work of art should have surveyed the whole human field, so that it can tell from what clay this precious thing was made, in what crafts-

was, since odd ladies liked to play with it, ultimately his chief source of income, would never have been important enough to be recorded if they had not formed a part of *What Maisie Knew* (1897); and the ensnarement of Sir Claude, her first step-parent, who was such a good fellow to talk to when his gaze didn't wander to the dark young woman in red who was sweeping into dinner or to the shining limbs of a Dieppe fishwife, by the beautiful, genteel young trollop who was her second step-parent, would have been a matter too *louche* for representation if Maisie had not so beautifully cared for him. The battle over *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), where the greedy mother tries to defend the fine "things" of her dead husband's house from her imbecile son's vulgar bride, would be too unrelievedly a history of greed to be borne were not exquisite Fleda Vetch in the foreground, being fond of the mother, loving the son. The best ghost story in the world, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), is the more ghostly because the apparitions of the valet

and the governess, appearing at the dangerous place, the top of the tower on the other side of the lake, that they may tempt the children they corrupted in their lives to join them in their eternal torment, are seen by the clear eyes of the honourable and fearless lady who tells the tale. And *In the Cage* (1898) has no subject but the purity of the romantic little telegraphist who sits behind the wire netting at the grocer's. Her heart is like a well of clear water, through which, when the handsome Guardsman comes in to send a telegram to his mistress, love strikes down like a shaft of light.

One pauses, horrified to find oneself ticking off these masterpieces on one's fingers, as though they were so many books by Mrs Humphry Ward or buns by Lyons. And yet what can one do? Criticism must break down when it comes to masterpieces. For if one is creative one wants to go away and spend oneself utterly on this sacred business of creation, wring out of oneself every drop of this inestimable thing art; and if one is

not creative one can only put out a tremulous finger to touch the marvellous shining crystal, and be silent with wonder. Deep wonder, since these are not, as fools have pretended, merely rich treatments of the trivial. For although he could not grasp a complicated abstraction, was teased by the implications of a great cause, and angered by an idea that could be understood only by the synthesis of many references, he could dive down serenely, like a practised diver going under the sea for pearls, into the twilit depths of the heart to seize his secrets. There is in humanity an instinct for ritual, there lies in all of us a desire to commemorate our deep emotions, that would otherwise glow in our bosoms and die down for ever, by some form that adds to the beauty of the world; but there is only one expression of it in literature that is not poisonously silly. Newman and the Tractarians and Monsignor Benson make the ritualist seem as big a fool as the old woman who carries a potato in her pocket to ward off rheumatism. Sabatier makes him seem the kind of

person who takes sugar in his tea, paints in water-colour and likes *The Roadmender*. But there is a story by Henry James called *The Altar of the Dead*, rejected again and again by the caste of cretins who edit the magazines and reviews of this unhappy country, although of so perfect a beauty that one can read every separate paragraph every day of one's life for the music of the sentences and the loveliness of the presented images, which takes ritual from the trembling hands of the coped old men and exhibits it as something that those who love the natural frame of things and hate superstition need not fear to accept. It tells how an ageing man acquires an altar in a Roman Catholic church and burns at it candles to his many dead, and by worshipping there keeps so close company with their charity and sweetness that, at his end, the blaze of white lights inspires him to a last supreme act of forgiveness to an enemy; and the beautiful recital makes one's mind no longer fear to admit that the splendour of a Cathedral Mass may, although one's

unbelief fly like an arrow through the show and transfix even the Cross itself, fulfil a noble need. Once at least Henry James poured into his crystal goblet the red wine that nourishes the soul.

And it held, too, a liberal draught of the least trivial distillation of man's mind, which is tragedy, in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). That story is the perfect example of what he had declared in *The Tragic Muse* the artistic performance should always be: "the application, clear and calculated, crystal-firm, as it were, of the idea conceived in the glow of experience, of suffering, of joy." For Milly Theale, the American heiress, "who had arts and idiosyncrasies of which no great account could have been given, but which were a daily grace if you lived with them; such as the art of being almost tragically impatient and yet making it light as air; of being inexplicably sad and yet making it clear as noon; of being unmistakably sad and yet making it soft as dusk," whose hopeful progress through Europe stops suddenly at the dark portal

in Harley Street, is but the ghost of Mary Temple, whose death thirty years before had been felt by Henry and William James as the end of their youth. All those years he had held in his heart the memory of that poor girl, " conscious of a great capacity for life, but early stricken and doomed, condemned to die under short respite while also enamoured of the world; aware, moreover, of the condemnation and passionately desiring to ' put in ' before extinction as many of the finer vibration as possible and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived " ; but with the prescience of the artist he had delayed until he had perfected his art to undertake the heavy task of presenting her tragedy without mitigation and yet making it bearable and beautiful. Then he lavished his technical resources on her history as he might have laid flowers on her grave. There is nothing more miraculous in all his works than the way he contrives that, when her agony becomes too great to be directly represented and has to be suggested by its effect upon others, he

yet breaks no link of the intimacy between the reader and his heroine, but provides that her increasing physical absence shall be so compensated for by her spiritual presence that her rare appearances are like long-expected visits from a distant friend. One's knowledge of her glows into love when one sees her holding a reception in the faded golden splendours of the Venetian palace to which she has dragged herself to die, smiling bravely at her guests, bidding musicians strike up to keep them gay, playing, to preserve her hands from any gesture of anguish or appearance of lassitude, with the rope of pearls that seems to weigh down her wasted body. Yet one gets one's vision through the hard, envious eyes of Kate Croy, who is the hawk circling over the poor dying dove, and the appalled gaze of Merton Densher, Kate's secret lover, whom she has trapped into a profession of love for Milly so that the deluded girl will leave him her fortune. And one sees her most radiantly of all in the interview which she grants to Densher when she has discovered the cruel

fraud practised on her and is dying of the knowledge, although one is told no more than that " she received me just as usual, in that glorious great *salone*, in the dress she always wears, from her inveterate corner of her sofa." From the love it lit in his heart, a love so great that for very shame Kate cannot marry him even when her machinations have achieved complete success at Milly's death, one perceives that this was the dying girl's assumption, that her sweetness and strength must at that hour have flowered so divinely that the skies opened and they were no longer matter for a human history. But about this masterpiece, too, there can be nothing said. One just sits and looks up, while the Master lifts his old grief, changed by his craftsmanship into eternal beauty as the wafer is changed to the Host by the priest's liturgy, enclosed from decay, prisoned in perfection, in the great shining crystal bowl of his art.

V

THE GOLDEN BOWL

THE signs of age appeared in Mr James' work like white streaks in a black beard; between two vital and vigorous books there would appear one that in its garrulity and complacent surrender to mannerism predicted decay. It became clear, first of all, that he was no longer able to bear up with serenity under his deep sense that life was a vale of tears. How much he wished it would all stop is manifest in that strangest of all visions of Paradise, *The Great Good Place* (1900). We all have our hopes of what gifts the hereafter may bring us, and in most cases we desire some compensation for the limitations of our human knowledge; we promise ourselves that when we lean over the gold bar of heaven a competent angel will bustle up, clasping innumerable divinely clear text-

books under its wings, to tell us absolutely everything about physics, with special reference to the movements of the heavenly bodies spinning below. But it is the essence of Mr James' Paradise that there is nothing there at all but a climate, a sweet soft climate in which the most that happens is one of those summer sprinkles that brings out smells. This fatigue of life, this hunger for the peace of nothingness, showed itself in his increasing preference for laying the scene of his novels in the great good places of this earth, where there is nothing more dangerous in the parks and on the terraces than deer and peacocks, and nothing more disturbing to the soul in the high rooms and interminable galleries than well-bred women. It was not a gain to his art; under its influence he committed the twittering over teacups which compose the collection of short stories called *The Better Sort* (1903), and the incidentally beautiful but devastatingly artificial *The Awkward Age* (1899), in which the reader is perpetually confused because Nanda Brookenham, one

of the most charming of Mr James' " pure in heart," is wept over as though she had been violated body and soul, when all that has happened is that she has been brought up in a faster set than the world thinks desirable for a young unmarried girl. And it was peculiarly unfortunate that, while his subjects grew flimsier and his settings more impressive, his style became more and more elaborate. With sentences vast as the granite blocks of the Pyramids and a scene that would have made a site for a capital he set about constructing a story the size of a hen-house. The type of these unhappier efforts of Mr James' genius is *The Sacred Fount* (1901), where, with a respect for the mere gross largeness and expensiveness of the country house which almost makes one write the author Mr Jeames, he records how a week-end visitor spends more intellectual force than Kant can have used on *The Critique f Pure Reason* in an unsuccessful attempt to discover whether there exists between certain of his fellow-guests a relationship not more interesting

among these vacuous people than it is among sparrows. The finely wrought descriptions of the leisured life make one feel as though one sat in a beautiful old castle, granting its beauty but not pleased, because one is a prisoner, while the small, mean story worries one like a rat nibbling at the wainscot. One takes it as significant that the unnamed host and hostess of the party never appear save to "give signals." The tiny, desperate figures this phrase shows to the mind's eye, semaphoring to each other across incredibly extended polished vistas to keep up their courage under these looming, soaring vaults, may be taken as symbols of the heart and intellect which Mr James had now forgotten in his elaboration of their social envelope.

But with this method, as in every form of literary activity save only playwriting, in which he was rather worse than Sidney Grundy in much the same way, Mr James gained his radiant triumphs. There could be nothing more trivial than the *donnée* of *The Ambassadors* (1903); there is no dignity

or significance in the situation of Lambert Strether, an American who is engaged, in that odd way common to Mr James' characters, to a woman whom he certainly does not love and hardly seems to like, and goes at her bidding to Paris to cut her cubbish son clear from an entanglement with a Frenchwoman. And yet so artfully is the tale displayed in the setting of lovely, clean, white Paris and green France, lifting her poplars into the serene strong light of the French sky, that the reader holds his breath over the story of how Strether " had come with a view that might have been figured by a clear, green liquid, say, in a neat glass phial; and the liquid, once poured into the open cup of *application*, once exposed to the action of another air, had begun to turn from green to red, or whatever, and might, for all he knew, be on its way to purple, to black, to yellow " ; how, in fact, the old " international situation " acted on the new generation of Americans. But that book is not typical of this period, for it is singularly free from those great sentences which sprawl

over the pages of *The Golden Bowl* with such an effect of rank vegetable growth that one feels that if one took cuttings of them one could raise a library in the garden. And it is those sentences which absorb, at the last, the whole of Mr James' attention.

For he ceased, as time went on, to pay any attention to the emotional values of his stories; it is one of the strangest things about *The Golden Bowl* that the frame on which there hangs the most elaborate integument of suggestion and exposition ever woven by the mind of man is an ugly and incompletely invented story about some people who are sexually mad. Adam Verver, an American millionaire, buys an Italian prince for his daughter Maggie, and in her turn she arranges a marriage between her father and Charlotte, her school friend, because she thinks he may be lonely without her. And although it is plain that people who buy "made-up" marriages are more awful than the admittedly awful people who buy "made-up" ties, they are presented to one as vibrating exquisitely to

every fine chord of life, as thinking about each other with the anxious subtlety of lovers, as so steeped in a sense of one another that they invent a sea of poetic phrases, beautiful images, discerning metaphors that break on the reader's mind like the unceasing surf. And when one tries to discover from the recorded speeches of these people whether there was no palliation of their ugly circumstances one finds that the dialogue, usually so compact a raft for the conveyance of the meaning of Mr James' novels, has been smashed up on this sea of phrases and drifts in, a plank at a time, on the copious flood:

"Maggie happened to learn, by some other man's greeting of him, in the bright Roman way, from a street corner as we passed, that one of the Prince's baptismal names, the one always used for him among his relations, was Amerigo; which—as you probably don't know, however, even after a lifetime of *me*—was the name, four hundred years ago, or whenever, of the pushing man who followed, across the sea,

in the wake of Columbus and succeeded, where Columbus had failed, in becoming godfather, or name-father, to the new continent; so the thought of any connection with him can even now thrill our artless breasts."

And as if it was not enough that these people should say literally unspeakable sentences like that, and do incredible things, the phrases make them do things which they never did. For the metaphors are so beautifully and completely presented to the mind that it retains them as having as real and physical an existence as the facts. When we learn that the relationship between Charlotte and the Prince had reared itself in Maggie's life like "some wonderful, beautiful, but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard, bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned, at the overhanging eaves, with silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly, when stirred by chance airs," and the simile is cunningly developed for seven or eight hundred words, one is left

with a confused impression that a pagoda formed part of the furniture at Portland Place and that Maggie oddly elected to keep her husband inside it. And to cap it all these people are not even human, for their thoughts concerning their relationships are so impassioned and so elaborate that they can never have had either energy or time for the consideration of anything else in the world. A race of creatures so inveterately specialist as Maggie Verver could never have attained man's mastery over environment, but would still be specialising on the cocoa-nut or some such simple form of diet.

Decidedly *The Golden Bowl* is not good as a novel; but what it is supremely good as can be discovered when one learns how, in these later days, Mr James used to compose his novels. He began by dictating a short draft which, even in the case of such a cartload of apes and ivory as *The Golden Bowl*, might be no longer than thirty thousand words. Then he would take this draft in his hand and would dictate it all over again with what he intended to be

enlightening additions, but which, since the mere act of talking set all his family on to something quite different from the art of letters, made it less and less of a novel. For the James family had, as was shown by their father's many reported phrases, by William James' charm as a lecturer, and by the social greatness of Robertson James, a genius for conversation. For long years it had remained latent in Henry James, who had in youth suffered much from that stockishness which often comes to those who are burning all their energy for creative purposes and have none left for personal display; but latterly it had been liberated by the consciousness of maturity and fame. At last it became a passion with him, and he decided to converse, not only with his friends, but with his public. This was bad for his novels, so long as one considered them as such, since a novel should be the presentation and explanation of a subject while a conversation is a fantasia of entertaining phrases on themes the essentials of which are to some extent already in the

possession of the interlocutors. But once one considers them as a flow of bright things said about people Mr James knows and that one rather thinks one has met, but is not quite sure, one perceives that the crystal bowl of Mr James' art was not, as one had feared, broken. He had but gilded its clear sides with the gold of his genius for phrase-making, and now, instead of lifting it with a priest-like gesture to exhibit a noble subject, held it on his knees as a treasured piece of bric-à-brac and tossed into it, with an increasing carelessness, any sort of subject—a jewel, a rose, a bit of string, a visiting-card—confident that the surrounding golden glow would lend it beauty. Indiscriminately he dropped into it his precious visions of his revisited motherland, in *The American Scene* (1907); the dry little anecdotes of *The Finer Grain* (1910); the tittering triviality of *The Outcry* (1911); and his judgment of his own works in the prefaces to the New York edition of the *Novels and Tales of Henry James* (1908-1909).

Always it was good, rambling talk, although fissured now and then with an old man's lapses into tiresomeness, when he split hairs until there were no longer any hairs to split and his mental gesture became merely the making of agitated passes over a complete baldness.

And here and there the prose achieves a beauty of its own; but it is no longer the beauty of a living thing, but rather the "made" beauty which bases its claims to admiration chiefly on its ingenuity, like those crystal clocks with jewelled works and figures moving as the hours chimed, which were the glory of mediæval palaces.

William James died in 1910, and Henry James, who had already begun to savour the bitterness of outliving brothers and friends and pets, whiled away the next few years of separation from his adored brother in the composition of two beautiful books about their childhood and youth, *A Small Boy* (1913), and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), and a third autobiographical volume

which is not yet published. Then came the European War, in which he enlisted as a spiritual soldier. By innumerable beautiful acts, by kindly visits to French and Belgian refugees and wounded soldiers, by gifts of money and writings to war charities, he raised an altar to the dead who had died for the countries which he had always loved at the hands of the country which, ever since he was a student at Bonn, he had always loathed. In July, 1915, he took the great step, fraught for him with the deepest emotions, of renouncing his American citizenship and becoming a naturalised British subject; and in January, 1916, he did England the further honour of accepting the Order of Merit. And on 28th February, 1916, he died, leaving the white light of his genius to shine out for the eternal comfort of the mind of man.

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MR HENRY JAMES' PRINCIPAL WORKS

[A complete bibliography of the works of Mr James would form a much thicker volume than this book. A useful bibliography up to 1906, compiled by Mr Frederick Allen King, is included as an appendix in Miss Elisabeth Luther Cary's *The Novels of Henry James* (Putnam); and a complete bibliography covering the same period, which gives an interesting list of his early unsigned contributions to periodicals, has been compiled by Mr Leroy Phillips and published by Messrs Constable. The following bibliography records only the first editions of publications in book form.]

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The New York Edition of the Novels and Tales of Mr Henry James was published by Messrs Macmillan during 1908-1909. Each novel and each volume of short stories has a critical preface by the author, and each volume has a photograph by Alvin Langdon Coburn as frontispiece. The following is the order:—

1. Roderick Hudson. 2. The American. 3, 4. The Portrait of a Lady. 5, 6. The Princess Casamassima. 7, 8. The Tragic Muse. 9. The Awkward Age. 10. The Spoils of Poynton; A London Life; The Chaperon. 11. What Maisie Knew; In the Cage; The Pupil. 12. The Aspern Papers; The Turn of the Screw; The Liar; The Two Faces. 13. The Reverberator; Madame de Mauves; A Passionate Pilgrim; The Madonna of the Future; Louisa Pallant. 14. Lady Barbarina; The Siege of London; An International Episode; The Pension Beaurepas; A Bundle of Letters; The Point of View. 15. The Lesson of the Master; The Death of the Lion;

The Next Time; The Figure in the Carpet; The Coxon Fund. 16. The Author of Beltraffio; The Middle Years; Greville Fane; Broken Wings; The Tree of Knowledge; The Abasement of the Northmores; The Great Good Place; Four Meetings; Paste; Europe; Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie; Fordham Castle. 17. The Altar of the Dead; The Beast in the Jungle; The Birthplace; The Private Life; Owen Wingrave; The Friends of the Friends; Sir Edmund Orme; The Real Right Thing; The Jolly Corner; Julia Bride. 18. Daisy Miller; Pandora; The Patagonia; The Marriages; The Real Thing; Brooksmith; The Beldonald Holbein; The Story in It; Flickerbridge; Mrs Medwin. 19, 20. The Ambassadors. 21, 22. The Wings of the Dove. 23, 24. The Golden Bowl.

Fordham Castle, The Jolly Corner and Julia Bride had not previously been published. All the early works have been subjected to a revision which in several cases, notably Daisy Miller and Four Meetings, amounts to their ruin.

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was, since odd ladies liked to play with it, ultimately his chief source of income, would never have been important enough to be recorded if they had not formed a part of *What Maisie Knew* (1897); and the ensnarement of Sir Claude, her first step-parent, who was such a good fellow to talk to when his gaze didn't wander to the dark young woman in red who was sweeping into dinner or to the shining limbs of a Dieppe fishwife, by the beautiful, genteel young trollop who was her second step-parent, would have been a matter too *louche* for representation if Maisie had not so beautifully cared for him. The battle over *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897), where the greedy mother tries to defend the fine "things" of her dead husband's house from her imbecile son's vulgar bride, would be too unrelievedly a history of greed to be borne were not exquisite Fleda Vetch in the foreground, being fond of the mother, loving the son. The best ghost story in the world, *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), is the more ghostly because the apparitions of the valet

and the governess, appearing at the dangerous place, the top of the tower on the other side of the lake, that they may tempt the children they corrupted in their lives to join them in their eternal torment, are seen by the clear eyes of the honourable and fearless lady who tells the tale. And *In the Cage* (1898) has no subject but the purity of the romantic little telegraphist who sits behind the wire netting at the grocer's. Her heart is like a well of clear water, through which, when the handsome Guardsman comes in to send a telegram to his mistress, love strikes down like a shaft of light.

One pauses, horrified to find oneself ticking off these masterpieces on one's fingers, as though they were so many books by Mrs Humphry Ward or buns by Lyons. And yet what can one do? Criticism must break down when it comes to masterpieces. For if one is creative one wants to go away and spend oneself utterly on this sacred business of creation, wring out of oneself every drop of this inestimable thing art; and if one is

not creative one can only put out a tremulous finger to touch the marvellous shining crystal, and be silent with wonder. Deep wonder, since these are not, as fools have pretended, merely rich treatments of the trivial. For although he could not grasp a complicated abstraction, was teased by the implications of a great cause, and angered by an idea that could be understood only by the synthesis of many references, he could dive down serenely, like a practised diver going under the sea for pearls, into the twilit depths of the heart to seize his secrets. There is in humanity an instinct for ritual, there lies in all of us a desire to commemorate our deep emotions, that would otherwise glow in our bosoms and die down for ever, by some form that adds to the beauty of the world; but there is only one expression of it in literature that is not poisonously silly. Newman and the Tractarians and Monsignor Benson make the ritualist seem as big a fool as the old woman who carries a potato in her pocket to ward off rheumatism. Sabatier makes him seem the kind of

person who takes sugar in his tea, paints in water-colour and likes *The Roadmender*. But there is a story by Henry James called *The Altar of the Dead*, rejected again and again by the caste of cretins who edit the magazines and reviews of this unhappy country, although of so perfect a beauty that one can read every separate paragraph every day of one's life for the music of the sentences and the loveliness of the presented images, which takes ritual from the trembling hands of the coped old men and exhibits it as something that those who love the natural frame of things and hate superstition need not fear to accept. It tells how an ageing man acquires an altar in a Roman Catholic church and burns at it candles to his many dead, and by worshipping there keeps so close company with their charity and sweetness that, at his end, the blaze of white lights inspires him to a last supreme act of forgiveness to an enemy; and the beautiful recital makes one's mind no longer fear to admit that the splendour of a Cathedral Mass may, although one's

unbelief fly like an arrow through the show and transfix even the Cross itself, fulfil a noble need. Once at least Henry James poured into his crystal goblet the red wine that nourishes the soul.

And it held, too, a liberal draught of the least trivial distillation of man's mind, which is tragedy, in *The Wings of the Dove* (1902). That story is the perfect example of what he had declared in *The Tragic Muse* the artistic performance should always be: "the application, clear and calculated, crystal-firm, as it were, of the idea conceived in the glow of experience, of suffering, of joy." For Milly Theale, the American heiress, "who had arts and idiosyncrasies of which no great account could have been given, but which were a daily grace if you lived with them; such as the art of being almost tragically impatient and yet making it light as air; of being inexplicably sad and yet making it clear as noon; of being unmistakably sad and yet making it soft as dusk," whose hopeful progress through Europe stops suddenly at the dark portal

in Harley Street, is but the ghost of Mary Temple, whose death thirty years before had been felt by Henry and William James as the end of their youth. All those years he had held in his heart the memory of that poor girl, " conscious of a great capacity for life, but early stricken and doomed, condemned to die under short respite while also enamoured of the world; aware, moreover, of the condemnation and passionately desiring to ' put in ' before extinction as many of the finer vibration as possible and so achieve, however briefly and brokenly, the sense of having lived " ; but with the prescience of the artist he had delayed until he had perfected his art to undertake the heavy task of presenting her tragedy without mitigation and yet making it bearable and beautiful. Then he lavished his technical resources on her history as he might have laid flowers on her grave. There is nothing more miraculous in all his works than the way he contrives that, when her agony becomes too great to be directly represented and has to be suggested by its effect upon others, he

yet breaks no link of the intimacy between the reader and his heroine, but provides that her increasing physical absence shall be so compensated for by her spiritual presence that her rare appearances are like long-expected visits from a distant friend. One's knowledge of her glows into love when one sees her holding a reception in the faded golden splendours of the Venetian palace to which she has dragged herself to die, smiling bravely at her guests, bidding musicians strike up to keep them gay, playing, to preserve her hands from any gesture of anguish or appearance of lassitude, with the rope of pearls that seems to weigh down her wasted body. Yet one gets one's vision through the hard, envious eyes of Kate Croy, who is the hawk circling over the poor dying dove, and the appalled gaze of Merton Densher, Kate's secret lover, whom she has trapped into a profession of love for Milly so that the deluded girl will leave him her fortune. And one sees her most radiantly of all in the interview which she grants to Densher when she has discovered the cruel

fraud practised on her and is dying of the knowledge, although one is told no more than that " she received me just as usual, in that glorious great *salone*, in the dress she always wears, from her inveterate corner of her sofa." From the love it lit in his heart, a love so great that for very shame Kate cannot marry him even when her machinations have achieved complete success at Milly's death, one perceives that this was the dying girl's assumption, that her sweetness and strength must at that hour have flowered so divinely that the skies opened and they were no longer matter for a human history. But about this masterpiece, too, there can be nothing said. One just sits and looks up, while the Master lifts his old grief, changed by his craftsmanship into eternal beauty as the wafer is changed to the Host by the priest's liturgy, enclosed from decay, prisoned in perfection, in the great shining crystal bowl of his art.

V

THE GOLDEN BOWL

THE signs of age appeared in Mr James' work like white streaks in a black beard; between two vital and vigorous books there would appear one that in its garrulity and complacent surrender to mannerism predicted decay. It became clear, first of all, that he was no longer able to bear up with serenity under his deep sense that life was a vale of tears. How much he wished it would all stop is manifest in that strangest of all visions of Paradise, *The Great Good Place* (1900). We all have our hopes of what gifts the hereafter may bring us, and in most cases we desire some compensation for the limitations of our human knowledge; we promise ourselves that when we lean over the gold bar of heaven a competent angel will bustle up, clasping innumerable divinely clear text-

books under its wings, to tell us absolutely everything about physics, with special reference to the movements of the heavenly bodies spinning below. But it is the essence of Mr James' Paradise that there is nothing there at all but a climate, a sweet soft climate in which the most that happens is one of those summer sprinkles that brings out smells. This fatigue of life, this hunger for the peace of nothingness, showed itself in his increasing preference for laying the scene of his novels in the great good places of this earth, where there is nothing more dangerous in the parks and on the terraces than deer and peacocks, and nothing more disturbing to the soul in the high rooms and interminable galleries than well-bred women. It was not a gain to his art; under its influence he committed the twittering over teacups which compose the collection of short stories called *The Better Sort* (1903), and the incidentally beautiful but devastatingly artificial *The Awkward Age* (1899), in which the reader is perpetually confused because Nanda Brookenham, one

of the most charming of Mr James' " pure in heart," is wept over as though she had been violated body and soul, when all that has happened is that she has been brought up in a faster set than the world thinks desirable for a young unmarried girl. And it was peculiarly unfortunate that, while his subjects grew flimsier and his settings more impressive, his style became more and more elaborate. With sentences vast as the granite blocks of the Pyramids and a scene that would have made a site for a capital he set about constructing a story the size of a hen-house. The type of these unhappier efforts of Mr James' genius is *The Sacred Fount* (1901), where, with a respect for the mere gross largeness and expensiveness of the country house which almost makes one write the author Mr Jeames, he records how a week-end visitor spends more intellectual force than Kant can have used on *The Critique f Pure Reason* in an unsuccessful attempt to discover whether there exists between certain of his fellow-guests a relationship not more interesting

among these vacuous people than it is among sparrows. The finely wrought descriptions of the leisured life make one feel as though one sat in a beautiful old castle, granting its beauty but not pleased, because one is a prisoner, while the small, mean story worries one like a rat nibbling at the wainscot. One takes it as significant that the unnamed host and hostess of the party never appear save to "give signals." The tiny, desperate figures this phrase shows to the mind's eye, semaphoring to each other across incredibly extended polished vistas to keep up their courage under these looming, soaring vaults, may be taken as symbols of the heart and intellect which Mr James had now forgotten in his elaboration of their social envelope.

But with this method, as in every form of literary activity save only playwriting, in which he was rather worse than Sidney Grundy in much the same way, Mr James gained his radiant triumphs. There could be nothing more trivial than the *donnée* of *The Ambassadors* (1903); there is no dignity

or significance in the situation of Lambert Strether, an American who is engaged, in that odd way common to Mr James' characters, to a woman whom he certainly does not love and hardly seems to like, and goes at her bidding to Paris to cut her cubbish son clear from an entanglement with a Frenchwoman. And yet so artfully is the tale displayed in the setting of lovely, clean, white Paris and green France, lifting her poplars into the serene strong light of the French sky, that the reader holds his breath over the story of how Strether " had come with a view that might have been figured by a clear, green liquid, say, in a neat glass phial; and the liquid, once poured into the open cup of *application*, once exposed to the action of another air, had begun to turn from green to red, or whatever, and might, for all he knew, be on its way to purple, to black, to yellow "; how, in fact, the old " international situation " acted on the new generation of Americans. But that book is not typical of this period, for it is singularly free from those great sentences which sprawl

over the pages of *The Golden Bowl* with such an effect of rank vegetable growth that one feels that if one took cuttings of them one could raise a library in the garden. And it is those sentences which absorb, at the last, the whole of Mr James' attention.

For he ceased, as time went on, to pay any attention to the emotional values of his stories; it is one of the strangest things about *The Golden Bowl* that the frame on which there hangs the most elaborate integument of suggestion and exposition ever woven by the mind of man is an ugly and incompletely invented story about some people who are sexually mad. Adam Verver, an American millionaire, buys an Italian prince for his daughter Maggie, and in her turn she arranges a marriage between her father and Charlotte, her school friend, because she thinks he may be lonely without her. And although it is plain that people who buy "made-up" marriages are more awful than the admittedly awful people who buy "made-up" ties, they are presented to one as vibrating exquisitely to

every fine chord of life, as thinking about each other with the anxious subtlety of lovers, as so steeped in a sense of one another that they invent a sea of poetic phrases, beautiful images, discerning metaphors that break on the reader's mind like the unceasing surf. And when one tries to discover from the recorded speeches of these people whether there was no palliation of their ugly circumstances one finds that the dialogue, usually so compact a raft for the conveyance of the meaning of Mr James' novels, has been smashed up on this sea of phrases and drifts in, a plank at a time, on the copious flood:

"Maggie happened to learn, by some other man's greeting of him, in the bright Roman way, from a street corner as we passed, that one of the Prince's baptismal names, the one always used for him among his relations, was Amerigo; which—as you probably don't know, however, even after a lifetime of *me*—was the name, four hundred years ago, or whenever, of the pushing man who followed, across the sea,

in the wake of Columbus and succeeded, where Columbus had failed, in becoming godfather, or name-father, to the new continent; so the thought of any connection with him can even now thrill our artless breasts."

And as if it was not enough that these people should say literally unspeakable sentences like that, and do incredible things, the phrases make them do things which they never did. For the metaphors are so beautifully and completely presented to the mind that it retains them as having as real and physical an existence as the facts. When we learn that the relationship between Charlotte and the Prince had reared itself in Maggie's life like "some wonderful, beautiful, but outlandish pagoda, a structure plated with hard, bright porcelain, coloured and figured and adorned, at the overhanging eaves, with silver bells that tinkled ever so charmingly, when stirred by chance airs," and the simile is cunningly developed for seven or eight hundred words, one is left

with a confused impression that a pagoda formed part of the furniture at Portland Place and that Maggie oddly elected to keep her husband inside it. And to cap it all these people are not even human, for their thoughts concerning their relationships are so impassioned and so elaborate that they can never have had either energy or time for the consideration of anything else in the world. A race of creatures so inveterately specialist as Maggie Verver could never have attained man's mastery over environment, but would still be specialising on the cocoa-nut or some such simple form of diet.

Decidedly *The Golden Bowl* is not good as a novel; but what it is supremely good as can be discovered when one learns how, in these later days, Mr James used to compose his novels. He began by dictating a short draft which, even in the case of such a cartload of apes and ivory as *The Golden Bowl*, might be no longer than thirty thousand words. Then he would take this draft in his hand and would dictate it all over again with what he intended to be

enlightening additions, but which, since the mere act of talking set all his family on to something quite different from the art of letters, made it less and less of a novel. For the James family had, as was shown by their father's many reported phrases, by William James' charm as a lecturer, and by the social greatness of Robertson James, a genius for conversation. For long years it had remained latent in Henry James, who had in youth suffered much from that stockishness which often comes to those who are burning all their energy for creative purposes and have none left for personal display; but latterly it had been liberated by the consciousness of maturity and fame. At last it became a passion with him, and he decided to converse, not only with his friends, but with his public. This was bad for his novels, so long as one considered them as such, since a novel should be the presentation and explanation of a subject while a conversation is a fantasia of entertaining phrases on themes the essentials of which are to some extent already in the

possession of the interlocutors. But once one considers them as a flow of bright things said about people Mr James knows and that one rather thinks one has met, but is not quite sure, one perceives that the crystal bowl of Mr James' art was not, as one had feared, broken. He had but gilded its clear sides with the gold of his genius for phrase-making, and now, instead of lifting it with a priest-like gesture to exhibit a noble subject, held it on his knees as a treasured piece of bric-à-brac and tossed into it, with an increasing carelessness, any sort of subject—a jewel, a rose, a bit of string, a visiting-card—confident that the surrounding golden glow would lend it beauty. Indiscriminately he dropped into it his precious visions of his revisited motherland, in *The American Scene* (1907); the dry little anecdotes of *The Finer Grain* (1910); the tittering triviality of *The Outcry* (1911); and his judgment of his own works in the prefaces to the New York edition of the *Novels and Tales of Henry James* (1908-1909).

Always it was good, rambling talk, although fissured now and then with an old man's lapses into tiresomeness, when he split hairs until there were no longer any hairs to split and his mental gesture became merely the making of agitated passes over a complete baldness.

And here and there the prose achieves a beauty of its own; but it is no longer the beauty of a living thing, but rather the "made" beauty which bases its claims to admiration chiefly on its ingenuity, like those crystal clocks with jewelled works and figures moving as the hours chimed, which were the glory of mediæval palaces.

William James died in 1910, and Henry James, who had already begun to savour the bitterness of outliving brothers and friends and pets, whiled away the next few years of separation from his adored brother in the composition of two beautiful books about their childhood and youth, *A Small Boy* (1913), and *Notes of a Son and Brother* (1914), and a third autobiographical volume

which is not yet published. Then came the European War, in which he enlisted as a spiritual soldier. By innumerable beautiful acts, by kindly visits to French and Belgian refugees and wounded soldiers, by gifts of money and writings to war charities, he raised an altar to the dead who had died for the countries which he had always loved at the hands of the country which, ever since he was a student at Bonn, he had always loathed. In July, 1915, he took the great step, fraught for him with the deepest emotions, of renouncing his American citizenship and becoming a naturalised British subject; and in January, 1916, he did England the further honour of accepting the Order of Merit. And on 28th February, 1916, he died, leaving the white light of his genius to shine out for the eternal comfort of the mind of man.

A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MR HENRY JAMES' PRINCIPAL WORKS

[A complete bibliography of the works of Mr James would form a much thicker volume than this book. A useful bibliography up to 1906, compiled by Mr Frederick Allen King, is included as an appendix in Miss Elisabeth Luther Cary's *The Novels of Henry James* (Putnam); and a complete bibliography covering the same period, which gives an interesting list of his early unsigned contributions to periodicals, has been compiled by Mr Leroy Phillips and published by Messrs Constable. The following bibliography records only the first editions of publications in book form.]

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The New York Edition of the Novels and Tales of Mr Henry James was published by Messrs Macmillan during 1908-1909. Each novel and each volume of short stories has a critical preface by the author, and each volume has a photograph by Alvin Langdon Coburn as frontispiece. The following is the order:—

1. Roderick Hudson. 2. The American. 3, 4. The Portrait of a Lady. 5, 6. The Princess Casamassima. 7, 8. The Tragic Muse. 9. The Awkward Age. 10. The Spoils of Poynton; A London Life; The Chaperon. 11. What Maisie Knew; In the Cage; The Pupil. 12. The Aspern Papers; The Turn of the Screw; The Liar; The Two Faces. 13. The Reverberator; Madame de Mauves; A Passionate Pilgrim; The Madonna of the Future; Louisa Pallant. 14. Lady Barbarina; The Siege of London; An International Episode; The Pension Beaurepas; A Bundle of Letters; The Point of View. 15. The Lesson of the Master; The Death of the Lion;

The Next Time; The Figure in the Carpet; The Coxon Fund. 16. The Author of Beltraffio; The Middle Years; Greville Fane; Broken Wings; The Tree of Knowledge; The Abasement of the Northmores; The Great Good Place; Four Meetings; Paste; Europe; Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie; Fordham Castle. 17. The Altar of the Dead; The Beast in the Jungle; The Birthplace; The Private Life; Owen Wingrave; The Friends of the Friends; Sir Edmund Orme; The Real Right Thing; The Jolly Corner; Julia Bride. 18. Daisy Miller; Pandora; The Patagonia; The Marriages; The Real Thing; Brooksmith; The Beldonald Holbein; The Story in It; Flickerbridge; Mrs Medwin. 19, 20. The Ambassadors. 21, 22. The Wings of the Dove. 23, 24. The Golden Bowl.

Fordham Castle, The Jolly Corner and Julia Bride had not previously been published. All the early works have been subjected to a revision which in several cases, notably Daisy Miller and Four Meetings, amounts to their ruin.

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